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TAGS: PREL PGOV KDEM PINR MD

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT OF ACADEMY OF SCIENCES ON
MOLDOVA'S UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: In a February 10 meeting with Ambassador Chaudhry, Dr. Gheorghe Duca, President of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, discussed the need for further reform and the upcoming parliamentary elections in Moldova. Duca underlined that voters were demanding liberalization in the economy and society in Moldova. He noted that the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) no longer had a communist platform and had responded to the evolving political and economic environment in Moldova by becoming a party of social democrats. End Summary.

Duca Criticizes Weakness of Moldovan Parliamentary System

¶12. (C) Duca explained that the parliamentary system in Moldova needed to strengthen the office of the Prime Minister. After all, he noted, the Prime Minister should run the government. Duca praised President Voronin as a strong administrator who had enabled democratic development in Moldova. He credited Voronin with having stopped the degradation of the educational system in Moldova and having increased funding for the Academy of Sciences. Nevertheless, Duca maintained that the office of the President should be occupied by a neutral individual. He suggested that a leader from civil society, an NGO or the educational sector would be appropriate. Duca noted that every election in Moldova since independence had resulted in a substantial decrease in support for the ruling party. This was a natural development since the unmet expectations of a ruling party would always become the focus of voter dissatisfaction in subsequent elections. In Moldova 75 percent of voters were neutral, having no enduring commitment to any particular party, and were likely to support a different party at every election.

Growing Strength of Liberal Politics

¶13. (C) Moldova was currently very restricted in many aspects by the government and citizens wanted liberalization, Duca noted. In particular, he noted that the economy was closed. This situation made it very difficult for Moldova to attract investment because of the burdensome bureaucracy and endemic corruption. Duca stated that the leading opposition parties were all supporting the

demand for greater liberalization in both the economy and society. The main dichotomy in Moldovan political life was the split between the PCRM and the liberals encompassing the leading opposition parties. He characterized the Liberal Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Our Moldova Alliance and the Democratic Party as parties seeking to liberalize Moldovan society.

The Communist are Really Social Democrats

¶4. (C) Duca criticized the PCRM's 2001 platform but noted that the party was no longer a communist party but had evolved into a social democratic party. He noted that he himself had served in the Communist party-led government as the Minister of Ecology from 2001 to 2004, though he was not a member of the PCRM. He said that he had initially told Voronin that he could not serve in the government because he was a social democrat. Duca related that Voronin had responded by saying he was also a social democrat. The PCRM had enlisted competent individuals to serve in the government who were not members of the party. Eight years ago the country had needed a strong leader to move the country towards democratic reform. Duca noted that Voronin was a good listener, but unfortunately nobody had convinced him to change the economy. He found the policies of the current Minister of Economy and Trade, Igor Dodon, discouraging, because Dodon had pursued a policy

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of monopolizing government control over the economy by consolidating more authority in the hands of his ministry. As an example, Duca noted that Dodon's ministry had taken over responsibility for trade in the agriculture sector. Duca speculated that the ruling PCRM would receive 30 to 40 percent of votes in the upcoming elections.

Who is the Next Prime Minister?

¶5. (C) Duca noted that Voronin would be a likely candidate to become Prime Minister, if the PCRM were able to form a government after the elections. He considered the current Speaker of the Parliament, Marian Lupu, to be an excellent candidate for Prime Minister. Lupu had served previously as the Minister of the Economy and supported liberalization in the economy.

Comment

¶6. (C) Duca's analysis of the desire by many Moldovans for liberalization in the economy and society is undisputed. However, it is unclear whether enough voters will choose change. Polls constantly give the PCRM 30 to 35 percent of the vote and indicate that only three to four opposition parties may make it over the six percent hurdle into Parliament, though observers differ on the short list of which parties will clear the threshold. The prospect of no clear voter mandate for a dominant party that could form a government and choose a president on its own continues to dominate discussion in Moldova. In a recent meeting former President Petru Lucinschi suggested that Duca might be a possible compromise candidate for president should neither the PCRM nor opposition coalition be able to elect their first nominee. In 2005 Duca was a candidate for

president, receiving one vote, when Voronin was reelected. Duca's comment that the President could come from academia, civil society or the NGO community may indicate his not so subtle interest in the office this spring. Should Voronin become Prime Minister, the new president would likely become a weaker figure in Moldovan politics.

CHAUDHRY